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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/25/2016

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SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS BAHRAIN

REF: AMMAN 2906

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe. Reason: 1.4 (B)(D)

¶1. (C) Palestinian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar visited Bahrain April 24 in a low-key visit that received limited local press coverage. On the morning of Zahar's visit, the Ambassador queried Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid about the visit on the margins of a Bahrain University graduation ceremony, expressing surprise that Zahar was still coming in light of the Jordanian cancellation of the visit (reftel). Responding defensively, Shaikh Khalid said that he had not wanted to meet Zahar but had been instructed to receive him in a low-key way, with no television cameras and limited press coverage. He said that he would deliver a tough message focusing on three points: the Palestinian government should recognize all agreements of the previous government; it should work with President Abbas; and its statement following the recent terror attack in Israel was unacceptable. The Ambassador urged that his message include a reiteration of the three Quartet points.

¶2. (C) On the evening of April 24, Palestinian Ambassador Ahmed Abbas Ramadan invited Arab Ambassadors in Bahrain to a meeting with Zahar at his residence. Jordanian Ambassador Hussein Majali provided the Ambassador with a readout of the meeting. He said that Zahar was "not offensive" in his presentation, stating that the Palestinians were not out to confront anyone, and especially not the United States. On Israel, he said that for the time being they consider Israel "our enemy, and we thank them as they consider us their enemy too." After discussing difficulties faced by the Hamas government, including loss of tax revenues from the Israelis, he said that the government was looking for aid from the international community, either directly or through such organizations as the World Bank or Arab League.

¶3. (C) Majali said that, in the question period, he told Zahar that it was his duty to ask about the cache of weapons smuggled by Hamas into Jordan. Zahar denied the allegation. Majali responded to Zahar that if that were true, either the Jordanian Government was lying or Hamas leadership has no control over its people. He doubted Zahar wanted to endorse either conclusion.

¶4. (C) Majali said that Palestinian Ambassador Ramadan looked particularly uncomfortable during the session. Ramadan was appointed as the new Ambassador just before the Palestinian elections, is known to belong to the Fatah camp, and is reportedly worried about his status here.

¶5. (SBU) We have not yet received a readout of the Foreign Minister's meeting with Zahar. Press coverage, as the Foreign Minister had predicted, was unusually sparse, with at most a picture with a caption saying that the Foreign Minister received Zahar and "reviewed bilateral relations."
MONROE